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**9 May, 2021**

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**Let's begin with a rousing declaration of the reason we are here ....**

**HYMN I know a Risen Saviour ... He Lives! He Lives!**

### **PRAYER**

Loving Father! That was Your plan, that Your Son Jesus' life should not end with His death on the cross, but that He should live in eternity with You, waiting for the time You send Him to reunite us with You! This is why we can declare with great confidence, "I know a Risen Saviour!"

Wherever we are, we are gathered around Your Throne, Eternal God, seated at the feet of Jesus. We are mindful of the world in which we live, the world around us and our families, the world in our community, the world of our nation, and the nations of this world. Your Name is glorified and Jesus has been, is being, and will be worshipped all over!

May this time each of us has, in worshipping You in prayer, Word and song, our Father, bring you joy and be a blessing to us. But this time is not just for me, its for all of us. Pour out Your Holy Spirit to reveal your joy to us at this time. In the Name of Jesus we declare this time of worship. **AMEN.**

**HYMN Heaven Came Down**

Today 9th May, 2021 is **Mother's Day** all over the world. We in the United Kingdom have the joy of celebrating our Mothers and motherhood **TWICE!** Here's a prayerful tribute to our Mothers:

Gracious and Loving Father! This Mother's Day, You give me occasion to remember my mother through whom You gave me life. She brought me into an imperfect world, but Father, she did the best she could, for me and any others you gave life, through her. I won't stand in judgement of her, but when the time comes Father, forgive and overlook her shortcomings and bless her with the reward of Heaven.

For the times I tested her patience, for the times we as a family did not appreciate all she did and could do for us, forgive me and us Loving Father.

If it's too late Father, please let Mother hear us saying the words you repeatedly say to us, *I love you!* But if it's not too late, may we have the humility, the courage and find the occasion to say to her, those words that are so precious to you: *I love you!*

Thank you Jesus for my Mother. **AMEN.**

## **HYMN    And can it be, that I should gain**

### **PRAYER**

Eternal God! Our world is in turmoil, and it seems like it's never been like this before. Death stalks every corner of the globe: the Corona virus is taking the lives of the innocent and destroying the lives of families. Heads of State in Burma and several countries in the Middle East are determined to kill their population to protect their inflated egos; health systems all over the world are falling apart under the pressure of sickness disease and corruption, and fear and intolerance makes us do things we should not be doing to friends, neighbours and fellow citizens.

Father, we pray you pour out Your Mercy, Compassion and Love to alleviate suffering and pain, and for all of us to experience your Majesty and Holiness. We ask in the Name of Jesus. **AMEN.**

## **HYMN    It Matters to the Master**

**READING**      John 6:43-69

## **MESSAGE - WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF JESUS?**

After the event we know as “The Feeding of the Five Thousand”, Jesus was hounded by the crowds who followed Him around the lake of Galilee and finally caught up with Him in Capernaum. All they wanted was to crown Him king of an earthly kingdom, one who would get the Romans off their backs. Two of their four questions was about their physical needs, *Moses gave us bread from Heaven, what will you give?* and when Jesus offered them **true bread from Heaven**, they asked “*give us that bread, every day*”!

Throughout human history, one of the most serious dangers we face is to have a sketchy understanding of God, through a superficial reading of His word. A particular danger arises when we apply God’s word against the cultural practice of contemporary society. Abraham made this mistake when he applied the cultural norms of his day, that of fathering a child through his wife’s personal servant, instead of depending on God’s promise, that **his descendants** would be settled on the land God showed him<sup>1</sup>.

Our passage today continues to demonstrate the danger of this approach, of a superficial reading of God’s word, which when applied against the social norms and cultural practices of our day, invariably leads to a misunderstanding of God, His plans and His eternal purpose. When we misunderstand God and make Him out to be the God **we** want Him to be, we have created an idol of God and are in serious danger of becoming idol-worshippers, breaking the second and longest of the ten commandments!

We have before us a remarkable discourse starting at verse 26, of Jesus’ teaching, and His response to comments and questions posed by His listeners. This would most likely have happened on a Sabbath, during a Synagogue

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:7

service in Capernaum<sup>2</sup>. Jesus likely was given the freedom of the synagogue, the opportunity to speak to the congregation.

Lest we misunderstand, during this discourse, Jesus is not defending Himself against accusations; even during His final hours, before the Sanhedrin, before Herod and before Pilate, Jesus **NEVER** defended Himself. And why should He?

Now during a Synagogue service on the Sabbath, hearing his detractors misunderstand His words and apply them wrongly, Jesus repeats what He has said all along, using different metaphors to convey His meaning, that people would understand Him.

People are angry that Jesus linked Himself to God's eternal Name, **I AM**. *This Jesus from Nazareth, son of Joseph the carpenter, whose parents we know, claims not only the Name of God, but that He is the bread that came down from Heaven! Who does He think He is?* On a relevant note, one can only imagine Mary's dilemma in giving her testimony of Jesus' birth, all that preceded and followed, which the Historian Luke very aptly captures, *and Mary kept all these things to herself*.<sup>3</sup>

There are times when we cannot communicate God's testimony in our lives, which would be like scattering seed that falls on unprepared and unproductive ground; it would be the equivalent of scattering a bag full of the most expensive natural pearls, into a farmyard full of pigs! They would not know what to do with it, let alone have any appreciation for it.

In this one chapter (6), Jesus repeats six times that he '*came down from heaven*'<sup>4</sup>. His claim to Heavenly origin is unmistakable. Each time he states His origin in Heaven, He uses **bread** as a metaphor: *Bread of life, Bread from heaven, Living bread*, and *Bread of God* are all metaphors, but people either don't understand, or don't want to understand. They have fixed ideas about God, and the Messiah when He comes would suddenly appear '*in the clouds*', but Jesus had quietly

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<sup>2</sup> John 6:59

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:19 and other verses in this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> 6:33, 38, 41, 50, 51, 58

grown up among them, and **this** they could neither appreciate, nor understand. Because of their shallow knowledge and understanding of Scripture, they confused their expectations of the second coming of Christ as King, as depicted in Daniel 7<sup>5</sup> and Isaiah 2, with Isaiah 9 of the lowly, yet exalted birth of the Saviour of the world, who came first to take upon Himself the sin of the world, breaking the stranglehold of death, before returning in God's appointed time, as King of the Kingdom of God.

So Jesus rebukes them, *Stop complaining about what I said!*, and proceeds to teach them **three important things** about our relationship with God:

1. God **draws** people to Jesus, who in the last day will raise them up to eternal life (v44)
2. God **teaches** those who will listen, and those who learn from God, come into Jesus' care (v45)
3. Jesus **feeds** those who come into His care, and sustains them for life in eternity.

First, God draws us into a relationship with Christ. John uses the same word that Jeremiah heard God say, *"I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love.*

*With unfailing love I have **drawn** you to myself."*<sup>6</sup> God is not drawing us to Himself, kicking and screaming against our will. This would be against the purpose of God in creating us **in His image** - that we should enjoy free will, as God enjoys free will! God's supreme act of creating us, was an act of love, that we, being in His image, would be His image-bearers in the world He created, and we would reproduce His image-bearers to fill (subdue) the earth.

The best analogy I have found to convey this sense of being "drawn" by God, is that of one sailing a yacht, where the yachtsman pulls the rope that unfurls the sail, tugs and pulls the rope and sets it to the wind and guides it through different wind strengths and direction, to safety on the shore.

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 31:3

All who come into a deeper relationship with Jesus, **drawn by the Father**, will receive eternal life and will be resurrected at the end of time.

Second, Jesus quotes Isaiah 54:13, which may have been part of the synagogue reading for that Sabbath, *I will teach all your children, and they will enjoy great peace*. God will teach His people Himself. What God teaches, will be “written” in their hearts and this teaching will lead people to Christ. The way John writes this, it appears as a rebuke to those challenging Jesus, *‘You have not been taught by my Father, you have therefore, learned nothing from Him; if you were indeed taught by my Father, you would come to me with natural enthusiasm. In your rejection of me you prove that you are strangers to the grace of God by which He draws people to Himself.’*

The final thing Jesus taught was about “feeding” on the eternal bread from Heaven, which people misunderstood as literally **eating** the body of Christ and **drinking** his blood, repulsive and repugnant to the Jew as acts of cannibalism.

Every one of us, feeds on something or other; one person feeds on Sunday newspapers; another feeds on frivolous entertainment, amusement and sport; another person feeds on his business and employment activities, all of which is temporal and temporary. Feeding on such things is like the ancestors of the Jews who fed on *manna* in the desert, which nourished them for the time they were there, but now are dead.

If one could create word images to describe this feeding, it would be that of a newly born lamb, drawn naturally to feed on its mother’s milk. Not only does this milk nourish the lamb, but the colostrum in mother’s milk bonds mother and offspring! This is the image of “feeding” Jesus offers us!

**“I AM the bread of life”** The point His listeners missed, because their reading of Scripture was superficial, and they took a literal meaning of eating “flesh” and drinking “blood”, was Jesus’ teaching that, *As bread is necessary for physical life, so Jesus is necessary for spiritual and eternal life.*

Jesus invites us into a deeper relationship with God through Him. Admiring Jesus for what He did, paying lip service for His sacrifice on the cross, is not the relationship God wants of us. God does not need us as advertising or PR agents. God wants us to be His image-bearers in this world. Feeding on **bread** reminds us Jesus came in human form, as one of us, to all of us. Quenching our thirst with wine (or juice, or water) reminds us of Jesus' resurrection; that which resembles "blood", reminds us that Jesus defeated death for us, that we might have eternal life with the Father.

### **Jesus' teaching was not hard to understand, it was difficult to accept!**

The Jews had an exalted view of themselves, *We are God's chosen race, to whom He promised to look after. Who is Jesus in the middle claiming to be God, claiming exclusive access to God?*

Jesus was right to say to those who followed Him, *If what I have said offends you, what will you say when you see the Son of Man ascend to Heaven again?*

Many disciples found Jesus' teaching difficult and turned away. Watching them leave, Jesus asks His chosen 12, *"Are you also not going to leave?"*

My favourite Disciple is Peter. Despite his blustery, off-the-cuff demeanour, his heart is surrendered to Jesus. I absolutely love the way the Holy Spirit speaks Truth through Him, *"Lord, to whom would we go? You have the Words that give eternal life. We believe, and we know, You are the Holy One of God."*

Can you make this declaration today? You have to be totally surrendered to the Person of Christ, to feed on His Word and draw nourishment from it on how to live life, and use our daily bread and wine (or juice or water) to remind us of the life Jesus lived and surrendered on the cross, and the life that flows through us as a result. **AMEN.**

**HYMN     Guide me O Thou Great Redeemer**



## **BENEDICTION**

God's Word was sent into the world to heal and redeem. God sends you into His world this day, to be light and love, healing and hope, in His Name and for His glory.

Go now to be light of Christ in God's world! And may the grace and peace of God the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sustainer, come upon you this day and remain with you always. **AMEN.**

## **HYMN I know who Holds Tomorrow**

*NOTE: Upon losing his wife at a young age, Ira Stanphill wrote this song expressing a prayer of surrender to his Saviour under circumstances he didn't understand. God doesn't promise that walking with Him will be easy, but what He does promise is that every day of our lives is in His hands and we can rest in the hope of His Son, Jesus Christ, who paid the punishment for our sins so that we can have hope and eternity with Him!*